

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 OMB-01 NIC-01 RSR-01 /120 W

----- 041537

R 241700Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5749

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 8563

LONDON FOR LAMBRKIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IN

SUBJ: THE CPI AND THE CONGRESS

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE AMORPHOUS BUT DURABLE FOUR-YEAR-OLD UNDER-
STANDING BETWEEN THE PRO-MOSCOW COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA
(CPI) AND THE RULING CONGRESS PARTY IS STRAINED BY DIS-
AGREEMENT OVER DOMESTIC POLICIES AND BY GROWING DIVERGENCE ON
FOREIGN POLICY. THE CPI IS FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO REMAIN
ASSOCIATED WITH THE GOVERNMENT WHILE MAINTAINING ITS MILITANT
IMAGE; THE US-SOVIET SUMMIT IS ALSO CREATING A POTENTIALLY
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AWKWARD PROBLEM FOR THE CIPV. ALTHOUGH MANY CONGRESSMEN
QUESTION THE IDEOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL VALUE OF CONGRESS-
CPI SYMBIOSIS, THE LEADERS OF BOTH PARTIES APPEAR TO FAVOR
CONTINUING THE ARRANGEMENT. FOR BOTH PARTIES, THE

ADVANTAGES STILL SEEM GREATER THAN THE LIABILITIES, BUT THE BALANCE IS NARROWING. END SUMMARY.

1. BACKGROUND: THE MUTUAL ASSISTANCE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE RULING CONGRESS AND THE CPI WAS FORGED IN 1969, WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER NEEDED CPI VOTES TO (A) ELECT V.V. GIRI PRESIDENT, (B) REMAIN IN OFFICE, (C) OFFSET CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS IN HER "NEW" CONGRESS, AND (D) GIVE A "RADICAL" IMAGE TO HER RUMP PARTY AND MINORITY GOVERNMENT. IN THE 1971 PARLIMENTARY ELECTIONS, THE CONGRESS LEFT SEVERAL SEATS UNCONTESTED FOR THE CPI TO WIN, AND THE CPI SUPPORTED CONGRESS NOMINEES ELSEWHERE; WITH 24 LOK SABHA SEATS, THE CPI EMERGED AS THE SECOND LARGEST PARTY IN PAR)8-.3,5, JUST AHEAD OF ITS ARCH-RIVAL, THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA-MARXIST (CPM). THE CPM, ONCE ACCUSED OF PRO-CHINESE PRO-CLIVITIES, NOW MAINTAINS A "NON-ALIGNED" STANCE VIS-A-VIS SOVIET, CHINESE AND OTHER RULING COMMUNIST PARTIES. IN WEST BENGAL AND KERALA IT HAS PRESENTED MILITANT RADICAL LEFT ALTERNATIVE TO BOTH THE CONGRESS AND THE CPI.

2. THE INDO-SOVIET TREATY SIGNING PN AUGUST 1971 RAISED CPI PRESTIGE AND LEGITIMWCY TO AN UNPRECEDENTED PEAK, AND IN RETROSPECT ALSO MARKED THE HIGH POINT OF THE CONGRESS-CPI ENTENTE. IN THE 1972 STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, THE CPI AND THE CONGRESS AGREED IN MANY STATES NOT TO RUN CANDIDATES AGAINST EACH OTHER. CPI REPRESENTATION IN STATE ASSEMBLIES ROSE FROM 75 TO 112. THE CPI HELPED THE CONGRESS TO DEFEAT THE CPM IN WEST BENGAL, A TOP-PRIORITY CONGRESS GOAL.

3. FOREIGN POLICY: THE CPI HAS GIVEN THE GOVERNMENT BROADEST SUPPORT IN THE FOREIGN POLICY AREA. ON SOME MAJOR ISSUES, CPI BACKING HAS BEEN EVEN STRONGER THAN THAT OF SOME CONGRESS-MEN, ESPECIALLY CONGRESS TRADE-UNIONISTS. INDIAN PERCEPTION OF THE ALIGNMENT OF INDIA AND THE USSR AND OF PAKISTAN WITH CHINA AND THE USA DURING THE BANGLADESH CRISIS SEEMED TO VALIDATE THE CPI STANCE. THE GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGED INCREASED INDO-SOVIET COOPERATION IN ECONOMIC, CONFIDENTIAL

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MILITARY SUPPLY AND CULTURAL FIELDS. US INFLUENCE AND PRESENCE SHARPLY DECLINED. ALL THIS SUITED THE CPI BOOK. WITH ITS FRIENDS IN CONGRESS, THE CPI PUSHED THE GOI LEFTWARD ON A RANGE OF LARGE AND SMALL ISSUES, WHICH PLACED INDIA IN AN APPARENTLY PRO-SOVIET, ANTI-US POSTURE.

4. THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, REMAINED FIRMLY IN CONTROL OF THE TIMING OF "LEFTWARD" GESTURES. INDIA AVOIDED ENDORSING SUCH MAJOR USSR FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES AS BREZHNEV'S "COLLECTIVE SECURITY" SCHEME AND TOOK NO PART IN MOVES DESIGNED TO ISOLATE THE PRC. THE 1973 WASHINGTON SUMMIT PRESENTED THE CPI WITH AN AWKWARD IDEOLOGICAL POSER--HOW IS IT THAT US TRADE AND INVESTMENT WILL BENEFIT USSR BUT

SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED IN INDIA? THE PRIME MINISTER'S REACTION TO THE SUMMIT, IN WHICH SHE "EQUATED" THE US AND USSR AS "GREAT POWERS" OF WHICH INDIA SHOULD BE WATCHFUL, PROVOKED THE FIRST PUBLIC CPI CRITICISM OF HER FOREIGN POLICY. THE CPI IS APPREHENSIVE ABOUT SWARAN SINGH'S TRIP TO IRAN AND THE POSSIBILITY OF BETTER INDO-IRANIAN TIES. INDIAN ACHIEVEMENT OF A NEW MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE US WOULD ALSO DISCOMFIT CPI. WERE IMPROVED INDO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS TO LEAD TO A THAWING IN THE SINO-INDIAN ARENA, THE CPI WOULD FACE A DIFFICULT PERIOD INDEED. IN SUM, THE CPI REMAINS UNDERSTANDABLY LEERY OF CHANGES IN INDIA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS WHICH MIGHT JEOPARDIZE ITS TIES WITH THE CONGRESS.

5. DOMESTIC POLICY: THE CPI HAS APPROVED OF THE DIRECTION OF GOI DOMESTIC ECONOMIC POLICIES BUT HAS CRITICIZED THEIR SCOPE AND PACE. THE CPI ENDORSED THE 1969 "RADICAL" TEN-POINT CONGRESS PROGRAM BUT URGED BROADER COVERAGE (E.G., NATIONALIZATION OF ALL BANKS, STATE TAKEOVER OF WHOLESALE TRADE IN ALL BASIC CONSUMER NEEDS) AND FASTER IMPLEMENTATION. THE CPI INITIALLY (1969-71) CONCENTRATED ITS FIRE ON THE THREAT FROM "RIGHT REACTIONARY" PARTIES SUPPORTED BY THE US. AFTER THE 1971 CONGRESS VICTORY, WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER NO LONGER NEEDED CPI VOTES IN PARLIAMENT, THE CPI RE-EMPHASIZED ITS SLOGAN OF "UNITY AND STRUGGLE". UNITY WITH "PROGRESSIVE ELEMENTS" IN CONGRESS WAS HELD TO BE THE BEST MEANS OF MOVING TOWARD SOCIALISM. THE CPI RESERVED THE RIGHT TO STRUGGLE AGAINST CONSERVATIVE CONGRESSMEN., CONGRESS "BACKSLIDING" AND ANTI-PEOPLE" POLICIES. IT HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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CALLED FOR A SECOND PURGE OR SPLIT TO CREATE TRULY "COMMITTED" CONGRESS FREE OF CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS. A VERY FEW CPI SYMPATHIZERS IN CONGRESS HAVE GONE FURTHER AND CALLED FOR A "LIMITED DICTATORSHIP" TO DEAL WITH THOSE OBSTRUCTING THE "MARCH TO SOCIALISM". ALTHOUGH CONCENTRATING ON CONSERVATIVE CONGRESSMEN, THE CPI STILL REGULARLY WARNS ABOUT THE DANGER POSED BY RIGHTIST PARTIES AND BY US PENETRATION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 02 APR 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 JUL 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: willialc
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973NEWDE00002
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730767/abqcebju.tel
Line Count: 150
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: n/a
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: willialc
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 31 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31-Jul-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <27-Aug-2001 by willialc>; APPROVED <27-Aug-2001 by willialc>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE CPI AND THE CONGRESS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IN
To: STATE INFO COLOMBO
DACCA
ISLAMABAD
KATHMANDU
LONDON
MOSCOW
HONG KONG

CINCPAC
BOMBAY
CALCUTTA
MADRAS

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005